



## Community Relations Commission

### ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, October 10, 2019

City Hall, Second Floor  
Rockford, IL 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/>

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Todd Burton called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

### A. Roll Call

Commissioner Name	Status
Eric Brown	Present
Todd Burton	Present
Jurea Crudup	Present
Victoria De La Rosa	Present
Erin Hannigan	Present
Nikki Lynch	Present
William Martin	Present
Anqunette Parham	Present
Ricardo Montoya Picazo	Present
Charles Prorok	Absent
Jay Ware	Present

### B. Acceptance of Proceedings for the Community Relations Commission meeting held on September 12, 2019.

Eric Brown made a Motion to Approve the Journal of Proceedings. Erin Hannigan SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 10-0.

## II. PUBLIC SPEAKERS

AJ Young from Prairie State Legal Services spoke about the services they offer to low income people. They work with victims of Domestic Violence, people facing eviction, people with benefit issues and challenges. They also work in different areas of the law, one being housing discrimination. AJ runs the Fair Housing Project for the past seven years. They are contracted in part by HUD to bring fair housing cases. Prairie State take individual complaints for housing discrimination, along with looking proactively in the community where they suspect there may be some form of unnatural barriers to get into housing.

Reverend Kenneth Board from Pilgrim Baptist Church spoke about Eliminate Racism 815, which is a 501(c)3, and approved by the Federal Government. The purpose of Eliminate Racism is to eliminate racism here in Rockford. The four areas of Racism they wanted to focus on were Education, Economic Opportunities, Criminal Justice Reform and Relationships.



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### III. INFORMATION ONLY

#### A. Departmental Overview: Department of Law

Legal Director Nick Meyer stated that as discussed at the last meeting that the various departments within the City of Rockford would present to the Commission. To give everyone a general overview of what we do for the City. The Legal Department primary roles is to advise the City Council, all of our City Departments represent all the commissions including the Community Relations Commission and the Committees.

Director Meyers stated the Legal Department also represents the City in negotiating Development and Intergovernmental Agreements with different taxing bodies. We are the FOIA Officers for the City of Rockford. Our most recent efforts have been for Blight Reduction. We also manage the liquor and tobacco licensing. We also do the litigation defense involving the City. We handle and advise the Human Resources Department in all of our employee related claims, as in discrimination and workplace harassment. We also represent the City in collective bargaining with all of the unions. We are also in charge of ensuring that our contractors are in compliance with the State, Federal and local wage issues and contracting.

Director Meyers stated that we advise all the departments, City Council and commissions. The City has nine departments that keep us busy. They are; Police, Fire, Legal Department, Finance, Public Works, Community and Economic Development and Human Services. We have six standing committees on City Council; Code and Regulations, Finance and Personnel, and Planning and Development meet every other Monday. The Ad Hoc Committees that meet as needed are the Legislative Lobbying Committee, Labor Negotiations, and Housing Committee.

Assistant City Attorney Lafakeria Vaughn stated that we want economic development within our City, and she works closely with the Economic and Development Department, our City Administrator, Todd Cagnoni and Legal Director Meyers on negotiating those agreements with developers throughout the City of Rockford. We work with the Developer, and make sure the City's interests are met, along with the communities needs, within those agreements.

Director Meyers stated the Legal Department is the final stop for the Freedom of Information Act Request (FOIA) We processed around three thousand FOIA requests in 2018. Each department has their own FOIA Officer, but all approvals come through the Legal Department.

Attorney Lafakeria Vaughn is heading the Blight reduction efforts, which is a large range of things. We have Codes and Neighborhood standards, Building Codes, and at some point if we cannot get owners to be good stewards of their properties, they will come before our Code Enforcement Process. Our job in the Legal Department is to protect the City's interest and to drive compliance.



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Attorney Lafakeria Vaughn stated that the Legal Department takes in all of the liquor and tobacco applications on a once a month bases. This is a lot to entail, as applicants have a lot of questions. Once a month there is a filing deadline, the following month the application will go before the Liquor and Tobacco Advisory Board. At that meeting the Applicant will present the application with what they are requesting and the Board will either Approve or Deny. After that it will go to the Code and Regulation Committee the following week, and the committee will either approve or deny the application as well, and then it will go to the City Council the following week for the final approval or denial. This is a two to three month process.

Legal Director Meyers went over the different kinds of lawsuits that the City defends, any State or Federal lawsuits or any suits in involving the State of Federal administration, that goes for State Court, Federal Court, Human Rights Commission, EEOC, and it ranges from property disputes, pot holes to Excessive Use of Force to personal injury, Slip and Falls. We also deal with property damage cases, when people do damage to City property, and also when City staff may back into someone or staff hits someone. Director Meyers also stated that the Legal Department also represents the City in all Collective Bargaining. The City has five unions. The IAFF local 413, which is fire. PBPA Unit 6 which is Police. We represent AFSCME 1058 that is our Public Works department, 911 Tele-communicators, some of the non-sworn personnel in the police department. AFSCME 1058B is the Code Enforcement staff, building inspectors and some of the City Planners. AFSCME 1058C is all of our Head Start Employees in our Human Services Department. We negotiate the contracts on a 3 year period.

Michelle Vella, Contract and Grant Compliance Officer for the City stated the areas she handles are the prevailing wage law compliance. As a municipality we have to follow the state law called the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act, that requires that we require contractors working on certain types of projects, specifically construction, maintenance, thing of that nature, to pay their workers certain prevailing wage determined by the Illinois Department of Labor. That wage is a base hourly wage plus fringe benefits. It is divided by classification based on the nature of the work being done. That is State Law.

There is a Federal Law anytime you are expending Federal funds of two thousand dollars or more, Davis Bacon Act kicks in for the Federal version of our State Prevailing Wage Law that also dictates the minimum wages that have to be paid. Michelle focuses on making sure that we as a City are complying with our obligations under these laws. Notably which projects are subject to the law, giving notice about the wages, and collecting certified payrolls for these types of projects. She also makes sure the contractors are fulfilling their requirements under the law, namely, paying the wages as evidence through certified payroll records that they file with us on a weekly basis. Since starting a year ago, she has been enforcing this with our contractors and holding payments if they are not complying with the law and filing the reports they are required to file.



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Another area that Michelle Vella works in is procurement compliance, this is a very large area that covers a lot of different things. We as a municipality have to follow certain rules when it comes to procurement. Making sure we advertise publicly and taking lowest responsible bidder for over \$25,000.00 projects, as an example.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS (MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS)

##### A. APPROVAL OF SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS; 2019-2020

William Martin made MOTION to Approve. Erin Hannigan SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 10-0

##### B. Adoption of Rules of Procedures and Order of Business

Eric Brown Made MOTION to CHANGE Public Speakers from 3 minutes to 5 minutes. William Martin SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 10-0.

#### COMMISSIONERS REPORTS:

Victoria DeLaRosa stated the League of Women Voters would be sponsoring an event on October 15<sup>th</sup> on Global Migration from 6-8 at the North Suburban Library. Other events related to Los Mortos will be on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

William Martin stated the River West Clinic is having a trunk or treat on Halloween from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Jay Ware stated that the World Café would be held on October 22, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Rockford Art Museum, 711 N. Main Street. Senator Stadleman is hosting an event on November 1<sup>st</sup>, about expunging police records, it will be held at the Nordlof Center.

Ricardo Montoya Picazo stated the City of Rockford held sessions a couple of weeks ago regarding neighborhood revitalization chats and invited the neighborhood residents to come in and to listen to their project. They were very informative and the people attending had great questions. Mr. Montoya Picazo stated that Talking for a Good Cause is a group that striated from talking about doing good things in our community and their biggest concern was the Latino Community had not put their biggest share to our community so they came out to help with bringing backpacks with essential needs for children entering the DCFS foster program. This will be held on the Day of the Dead, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Todd Burton wanted to highlight that this is Mental Health Awareness Week and NAMI is doing a rally for Mental Health on October 13<sup>th</sup> from noon to 1:00 p.m. at Veteran's Memorial Hall.



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Erin Hannigan stated that the Winnebago County Courthouse now has lactation rooms.

William Martin Made MOTION to Adjourn. CARRIED 10-0

Meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.